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ABSTRACT

The struggle for peace is a story filled with action, drama, and heroism that should be presented in a peace museum based on a careful selection of themes and the events, individuals, and movements within each theme. An outline provides 18 possible major themes to be addressed in the content of a peace museum in order to present a comprehensive picture of the history and evolution of peace: (1) the unity and fragility of the globe; (2) the experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; (3) the anti-nuclear weapons movement; (4) wars and weapons of the post-1945 world; (5) oppositional movements to the military threat and the militarisation of society; (6) the idea of peace in antiquity and in the world's religions; (7) the faithfulness to the pacifist doctrine of heretical sects in the Christian world in the Middle Ages; (8) the enlightenment and the growth of the peace sentiment; (9) following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815; (10) the development of the organized peace movement in the second half of the 19th century; (11) official endeavors for peace, arbitration, growth of international law in the decades leading up to 1914; (12) the radical and socialist peace movements before 1914; (13) the fate of war-resisters in World War I; (14) developments during the inter-war period; (15) international organizations in the post-1945 world; (16) domestic oppression and injustice and the non-violent struggle against it; (17) academic concerns about the causes of war and violence following World Wars I and II; and (18) the growth of international law. (CK)

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ON THE CREATIVE PRINCIPLES, MESSAGE AND THEMATIC CONTENT OF A PEACE MUSEUM

Peter van den Dungen

A peace museum should exhibit objects related to ideas, efforts, achievements about peace. The fight for peace (and with peaceful means) is a story filled with action, drama and heroism. The rich diversity of peace history should be fully reflected in the museum, based on a careful selection of themes, and within each theme of events, individuals, movements etc. A general outline of eighteen possible major themes is presented. In addition, separate sections characterized by the nature of the objects displayed may be of value (for example, a "Cartoon Gallery", a gallery of Nobel peace laureates or "The Great Books of Peace") and add to the liveliness and variety of the peace museum.

ON THE CREATIVE PRINCIPLES, MESSAGE AND THEMATIC CONTENT OF A PEACE MUSEUM

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Defining "Peace" and "Museum"

The themes suggested below, and to be represented and illustrated in a peace museum, are based on an elementary definition of the core concept "peace", namely "freedom from or cessation of war", with war being defined as "strife usually between nations conducted by force" (both definitions have been taken from the Concise Oxford Dictionary).

"Museum" is defined by the same source as a "building used for storing and exhibition of objects illustrating antiquities, natural history, arts, etc.".

To live up to its name, and as a minimum requirement, a peace museum therefore should exhibit objects related to ideas, efforts, achievements about peace (as defined above). It seems important to agree on the essentials of the enterprise, and not to lose sight of them, in order to have any hope of bringing it to a successful realisation. A coherent and feasible project requires a central theme and vision, and the exclusion (at least in the first instance) of everything that is not germane.

The dangers and temptations to burden a peace museum with tasks and functions which are inessential, secondary, or extraneous, are obvious. "Peace" can easily be expanded in such a way that virtually no human endeavour is excluded, starting with intra-personal considerations. "Museum", likewise, is faced with competing claims and interpretations. Research and study are not the primary tasks of a museum, nor the setting up of a library or of an information/documentation centre.

Recognition of the specific and unique task of a peace museum is dependent on the awareness of two factors: firstly, the existence of centres for peace study and peace research, peace libraries and documentation centres; secondly, the long, dramatic and rich history of peace. It frequently seems that a certain ignorance about both factors (especially the second one) – on the part of those not professionally engaged in peace studies – results in over-emphasising, when discussing the nature and possible contents of a peace museum, its research and library functions rather than its museum function proper.

Function of a Peace Museum

As just mentioned, there is widespread ignorance about the history of peace; moreover, there is also the belief that focussing on the history of peace is bound to be boring, irrelevant, inadequate. However, the opposite is the case. The fight for peace (and with peaceful means) is a story filled with action, drama, emotion, glory, heroism, victory and defeat. It concerns the aims and ideas, means and methods, which have recurred throughout history; much of it has been repressed or forgotten, or is only now recognised for its prophetic qualities. Many of the ideas which a peace museum will have to focus on may have been voiced and formulated in the past but their realisation is frequently still in the future. The emphasis on the history of peace does not mean that present and future concerns are ignored; they will be inherent in the "telling of the tale".

This tale has been well told in print, especially with the emergence, in the last few decades, of peace history as a branch of the scientific study of peace. To tell it largely through a different medium (namely, objects and displays) is what a peace museum is about.

Variety and Diversity of Themes and Displays

The rich diversity of peace history should be fully reflected in the museum, based on a careful, judicious selection of themes, and within each theme, of events, individuals, groups, institutions, campaigns, movements, proposals, policies. Efforts for peace, both individual and collective, private and public, national and international, past and present, should be represented.

The variety and diversity of themes and subjects should be matched by a similar variety and diversity in the way in which they are presented and illustrated. Both traditional means (visual arts, printed materials, manuscripts) and modern means (film, video, interactive learning devices) should be used. From among the visual arts to be represented in a peace museum can be mentioned: paintings (originals and reproductions, from Goya to Picasso), engravings and etchings (Daumier, Callot), cartoons (Daumier, Low), sculptures (incl. busts); also textile materials (ribbons, banners, flags) and ornaments (vases etc.). Printed materials may include books (incl. pamphlets, journals, newspapers), posters, leaflets and handbills, postage stamps and banknotes, documents (incl. parchments, scrolls, autographs, letters, postcards, diaries, petitions, telegrams, music scores,

world citizen passport), maps. All manner of other memorabilia – which have to be meaningful and, preferably, original and unique – of peace leaders, peace societies, peace campaigns and peace movements will have to be identified, located, and acquired (either by purchase, donation, or long term loan). A great deal of such material is of course to be found in the archives of the peace movement. The problem is not one of scarcity of potential display items, but of their abundance, and the process of selection will have to be a careful one.

In addition to existing objects, other items for display will have to be specially produced (e.g. maps, graphs, diagrams, enlarged photographs, framed quotations, etc.); the same applies to interactive learning devices which will have to be designed and produced. It is important that full but judicious use is made of the latest museum technology and that, in a number of sections, a "hands on" approach is adopted, allowing for active participation by the museum visitor.

Organising Principles

Careful thought will have to be given to the organisation of the displays, especially the main organising principles. At least three possible ways of proceding suggest themselves: chronological, thematic, and according to social unit.

The latter approach is based on a progressive enlargement of the unit or level considered, starting with the individual human being and, through the local community, national country, region or continent ("one Europe") and globe ("one world") ultimately considers peace in the context of the universe. A variation of this approach adopts geography as the main organising principle so that displays are organised in local, national, and international sections.

It is suggested here, however, that a more appropriate and successful approach is the thematic one according to which the museum's content (and message) is organised in some ten, fifteen or twenty (or so – one factor influencing this kind of decision is of course the total exhibition space available, as well as the concrete lay-out of the building) thematic sections, which ideally should be logically linked.

Within thematic sections, and depending on their precise subject content, a chronological approach may sometimes be appropriate. For instance, in the section dealing with individual conscientious objection to war and

military service, it may be appropriate to document this phenomenon from the earliest times up to the present (which will of course have to be done in a highly selective manner in view of its long and rich history).

Since history is frequently more effectively taught and made more interesting, when the starting-point is the present, and the idea or phenomenon to be considered is gradually traced back to its first emergence, flexibility must be allowed for in the chronological presentation of a theme. For instance, a thematic section on "Women and Peace" (or "The Women's Peace Movement") might start with contemporary manifestations (in the U.K. this would be the Greenham Common women of the 1980s) before considering earlier examples of women's involvement in the peace cause.

Again, variety and flexibility in the way in which the story is told, as well as depicted, should be a paramount consideration so that the visitor is frequently surprised, impressed, moved. No simple scheme, which is repeated in every section, should be adopted. Professional museum advice will have to be sought on this as on many other (especially technical) points concerning the organisation of the museum's content.

The essentially thematic approach for the display of exhibits which is suggested here does not necessarily exclude the presence of some sections which would be organised on the basis of a different principle. For instance, it may well be desirable to think of a number of sections which are characterised by the nature of the exhibits displayed in them. A "Cartoon Gallery" could, for instance, be a very striking and interesting (and popular) section in its own right – even though cartoons may well be found in several of the thematic sections. Likewise, separate sections for the display of e.g. peace posters, or banners, or stamps might be envisaged. A separate section devoted to "Peace Classics" or "The Great Books of Peace" is another possibility as is, of course, a gallery of Nobel peace laureates.

The interspersing of such special sections (of which several more can easily be suggested – for instance, the theme of peace in music, classical, popular, and protest) among the thematic sections will not only appeal to special interest groups (i.e. lovers of books, cartoons, postage stamps, banners, coins, paintings ...) but will again add to the liveliness and variety of the museum's core content.

Need for Balanced Approach

In the development of each thematic section it will be important to achieve a balance between a number of different factors. Firstly, between the specific subject or theme displayed and the larger historical, political and social context in which the subject or theme has emerged and has to be understood. For instance, in a section devoted to "Women and Peace" the feminist peace movement should be set against the background of the larger issue of women's emancipation. These larger issues should only be sketched in and must remain as a setting only in which to depict the chief events, ideas, personalities etc. of the specific theme.

Secondly, a balance has to be struck between the past and present (and future!). Given the ready availability of display items relating to the contemporary and post-World War II peace movement, it would be only too natural and tempting to furnish the museum largely with such materials. Such a procedure would be unfortunate and myopic: it would fail to do justice to the peace concerns and endeavours of the past, and in doing so would diminish the subject. Furthermore, by thus failing to exploit the potential of a rich past, the museum itself would be impoverished, and its visitors would have been offered only a kind of dessert instead of a full menu.

It may be prudent – for good museological and educational reasons in the first place, but perhaps also for reasons related to the likely charitable status of the institution and the need for it to be above party-politics – to present the aims and activities of what constitutes the current national and international peace movement in a "supporting division" of the museum (see below). The peace movement's several constituent organisations could each have a section to itself; it is likely that information, publicity, and propaganda will come together here more naturally and legitimately than would be acceptable in the museum's core display. This is of course not to argue for a complete separation between the historic and the current, but merely to suggest one way in which the latter can be fully developed and represented without unbalancing the core display.

It is obvious that for many sections the depiction of past and present will be accompanied by an agenda ("things to be done") specific to each section, or a list of desiderata. For instance, listing countries which still have to ratify certain regional or international conventions; suggested revisions of the U.N. Charter; extension of controls on the arms trade; suggestions for strengthening the role of the International Court of Justice. In this way, the

visitor will be presented with a comprehensive and concrete view of what has been struggled for (since when, by whom, against what obstacles, at what cost), what has been achieved, and what remains to be done – and this for several of the thematic sections of the museum. The visitor will thus not only have been informed about the desirability and possibility of change in the past but will also be encouraged to consider the continuing need for change and development.

Thirdly, and most importantly, a proper balance has to be found between negative and positive aspects of the subject. One extreme version of a peace museum would satisfy itself with showing the horrors of war, while another extreme version would limit itself to showing the glories of peace. Both would be equally ineffective and inappropriate and, qua museum, unlikely to be successful. The aims of the peace movement and of individual peacemakers cannot be understood without a knowledge of some hard and unpleasant realities (in the past and/or present): the persecution of conscientious objectors and war resisters, the existence of cruel tyrannies, the waste and dangers inherent in the arms race, the prospect of a nuclear holocaust. These phenomena will have to be documented – but neither so extensively nor in such a manner that an atmosphere of "doom and gloom" would pervade the museum. Rather, the opposite effect should be intended: without distorting reality, or the enormity of the tasks ahead, to convey the impression that hope and progress are not illusory. The individual visitor should be made to feel empowered, rather than despondent, at the end of the visit. A suitable quotation (the truth of which the museum will have attempted to illustrate through its exhibits) above the exit-door might well be: "Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little" (Edmund Burke), or: "The difficult is what takes a little while; the impossible is what takes a little longer" (Fridtjof Nansen). No doubt, many visitors – especially members of peace groups or those involved in peace research – will, already before their visit, subscribe to such views (and will have them confirmed as a result of their visit). However, it is likely that many more visitors will form that opinion only after they have been made aware of the progress of the peace idea – and of the vital role in it of individual initiative and effort.

Need for a "Supporting Division"

As suggested above, the presentation of the current peace movement, in all its diversity, is possibly best done in a section which is separate from the core museum content. Such a "supporting division" of the museum would normally also be expected to provide opportunities for the performing arts (e.g. performing peace plays), for discussion groups, public lectures, conflict resolution workshops etc. The precise location, both physical and otherwise, of these activities in the museum – in order to ensure that they are neither marginalised nor needlessly intrusive or disturbing – is again a matter for consideration and professional advice.

The "supporting division" can also be made responsible for the organisation of temporary exhibitions (and much can be learned here from the extensive experience in this regard of the Chicago Peace Museum). It is assumed here that (unlike in the Chicago Peace Museum, but like the vast majority of other museums) the space allocated to temporary exhibitions will be a fraction of that occupied by the permanent collection. There can be little doubt that there will be a constant supply of interesting and worthwhile exhibitions, from home and abroad – in addition to those which the museum itself may from time to time put on or commission.

It is the permanent collections, however, which are at the heart of the museum. Their identification, location and acquisition will be a major part of the preparatory work. At the same time it should always be borne in mind, as mentioned already, that several exhibits will have to be made to order (e.g. those relating to numbers of wars, weapons, soldiers, conscientious objectors, peace protesters, etc., and for which striking graphs and statistical tables may have to be produced. Such graphs and tables frequently will be available already, but not in a format suitable for display in a museum – there may be a need for enlargement, colour, etc.).

Themes to be Illustrated in a Peace Museum

The following are among the themes suggested for shaping the intellectual content of a peace museum; they are given in no particular order (except for the first two). It will be necessary, of course, to ensure that there is coherence in the way in which the various themes are selected and combined (and that the order in which they are presented in the museum has an underlying logic).

1. The unity and fragility of the globe: illustrating the beauty and fragility of planet earth, making use of photographs taken from outer space; earth as one eco-system.

2. The experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: the advent of the nuclear era; growth of the nuclear arms race; nuclear testing and weapons proliferation.

   For the first time in history, in our day, humanity has been able to see itself, literally, as one physical entity; for the first time also, a few years earlier, it entered the atomic era and thereby acquired the power to destroy the world in a moment. Humanity has become one in the threat which it faces. These two momentous developments, documented in these first two sections, might provide an appropriate opening. Peace has become an imperative of our age. (But the idea of peace, the wish for it, and efforts waged on its behalf, are not new – as the rest of the exhibits aim to show.)

3. The anti-nuclear weapons movement spawned by the events and developments described in theme 2; the concerns of the atomic scientists (several of whom fathered the atomic age); the Russell Einstein manifesto and the Pugwash movement; anti-nuclear testing campaigns; official measures to contain the danger: Non-Proliferation Treaty and Partial Test Ban Treaty; deterrence: dangers, morality, alternatives.

4. Wars and weapons of the post-1945 world: nuclear weapons may have kept the nuclear peace, but many international and civil wars have taken place (and still are taking place): statistics; growth of armies and arsenals, proliferation of conventional, chemical, and biological arsenals. Opportunity costs.

5. Oppositional movements to the military threat and the militarisation of society; growth of war resisters' movement; recognition of C.O.'s; growth of peace tax campaign; campaign against the arms trade; U.N. arms register; conversion of arms production to civilian production.

6. The idea of peace in antiquity and in the world's religions; essential similarity of views; gradual erosion of the peace doctrine of religions; the Christian Just War doctrine.

7. The faithfullness to the pacifist doctrine of heretical sects in the Christian world in the Middle Ages; peace as a concern of leading figures from the Renaissance and Humanism (Erasmus); emergence of the Christian peace churches (Mennonites, Quakers).

8. The Enlightenment and the growth of the peace sentiment; the peace plans and writings of the great philosophers of the 18th century: St. Pierre, Rousseau, Voltaire, Kant, Bentham, Paine. Early proposals for the unification of Europe; Saint-Simon and his sect.

9. Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars (1815): the birth of the organised peace movement, initially in the USA and England, later on the continent of Europe. Foundation of the American, London, and Geneva peace societies; their leaders, programmes, and achievements; the great peace congresses of the middle of the 19th century (of the organised peace movement); in England: Cobden and Bright and the free trade movement.

10. The development of the organised peace movement in the second half of the 19th century; culminating in a great intensity of activity in the 25 years preceding World War I; inauguration in 1889 of the annual Universal Peace Congresses and congresses of the Inter-Parliamentary Union; foundation in 1891 of the International Peace Bureau; the impact of Bertha von Suttner's famous anti-war novel (1889); her influence on Nobel to support the peace cause (leading to the establishment of the Nobel peace prize).

Important developments earlier on: Dunant's "Memory of Solferino" (1862) and the foundation of the Red Cross; first Geneva Convention (1864); growth of arbitration between states; the Alabama case between the USA and Britain (1872).

11. Official endeavours for peace, disarmament, arbitration, growth of international law, in the decades leading up to 1914: 1899 First Hague Peace Conference, 1907 Second Conference; creation of the Peace Palace; the involvement of Carnegie; first Pan-American Conference (1889).

12. The radical and socialist peace movements before 1914: Tolstoy and Tolstoyans, Dukhobors in Russia (and influence abroad); Second Socialist International and the prevention of war; idea of the general strike to prevent war.

13. Fate of war-resisters in World War I; proposals for mediation; Ford's peace ship; planning for a League of Nations; Woodrow Wilson's ideas; Versailles and Keynes' indictment of peace settlement.

14. Developments during inter-war period: evolution of the League; arms control treaties and the 1932 disarmament conference; anti-colonial movements; Gandhi's practical philosophy and theory of non-violent action; fate of pacifists and peace movement in Nazi-

Germany.

15. International organisations in post-1945 world: UN and its agencies; UN peacekeeping; regional organisations in the Americas (OAS), Africa (OAU) and elsewhere; unification of Europe (free in the West, forced in the East); decolonisation; wars for freedom and national independence; growth of non-governmental organisations (Amnesty).
16. Domestic oppression and injustice, and the non-violent struggle against it; US Civil Rights movement (M.L. King); growth of human rights movements, charters, legislation; contemporary developments world-wide.
17. Academic concern about the causes of war and violence following World Wars I and II; growth of the study of international relations post-World War I; emergence of peace research post-World War II; main findings, figures, institutes; peaceful conflict resolution.
18. Growth of international law; growth of universal consciousness and responsibility; liberation and emancipation movements world-wide; interrelatedness of justice, freedom, liberty, and peace.

The above represents a preliminary and general outline of some of the main themes and subjects which a peace museum will have to deal with in order to present a comprehensive picture of the history and evolution of peace.

Other aspects affecting the creation of a peace museum, such as the question of funding sources and general support, have been addressed in my article: "Proposals for a Peace Museum in Britain: Some Observations" (Medicine and War, vol. 7, no. 4, Oct.-Dec. 1991, pp. 275-287).

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